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ITT DIALCOM INC. WINS 3-YEAR CONTRACT

USDA has awarded a three-year contract to ITT Dialcom Incorporated to continue providing office automated services integrated with a computer-based messaging system.

The new contract awarded through Federal competitive procedures replaces several individual USDA agency contracts, including the two major contracts administered by the Extension Service and the Office of Information.

ES has administered a previous three-year contract to provide office automated services to the cooperative extension and research agencies and land grant universities (AGS network).

OI has administered annual contracts for the past four years for the governmental and public affairs staff offices and agency public affairs/public information offices (AGR network) and for the past three years for the Office of the Secretary and selected program agencies (DAG network).

Three or four other USDA agencies have maintained their own small agency contracts.

"The new contract means that the expanding network of more than 2,000 users in USDA and the land grant universities can continue to take advantage of the many computerized communications services offered through ITT Dialcom," says Stan Prochaska, chief of OI's Special Programs Division.

'USDA ONLINE' ON DIALCOM SYSTEM EXPANDS

"USDA Online," the electronic news and information service offered through the ITT Dialcom system by USDA's Office of Information for the past three years, will not only be continued but will be expanded.

Arrangements have been completed and contracts signed in order for USDA news and reports to be pulled from USDA's new electronic dissemination of information (EDI) service on the Martin Marietta Data Systems computer and placed into "USDA Online" on the ITT Dialcom system.

Engineers and programmers with the two vendors have successfully linked the two systems and plans are to begin transferring information by the second week of October.

Trade leads and some other significant reports from USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service will be added to the "FAS" menu selection. Practically all USDA crop and livestock reports from the Statistical Reporting Service will be carried in the "CRB" menu offerings. A world agricultural report issued by USDA's World Agricultural Outlook Board also will be offered.

Summaries of the Economic Research Service's outlook and situation reports, along with USDA news releases and the popular daily news summary, "AGa.m.," will be continued.

Meanwhile, three other agricultural information dissemination services, Agnet, AgriData Network and Knight-Ridder's Commodity News Service, have also begun pulling USDA news and current reports from EDI and offering to their farmer, trade and media clients.

Through the new EDI, and electronically-linked information "retailers," USDA news and current reports are moving almost instantaneously from USDA to those who need or want this information. Emphasis in USDA is moving rapidly away from the "printed" word to the "electronic" word.

EDI USERS' GROUP FORMED

USDA has its very own computer "users' group" now, composed of data administrators of eight agencies spearheading the department's EDI (for electronic dissemination of information) service offered to the media and public through Martin Marietta Data Systems.

The group met Sept. 24 for the first time to share information on the new system, which is up and running and dispensing bulk data quickly and efficiently to its 15 users. Don't let that number fool you, by the way. Among those users are electronic news services that take raw information in -- an entire 41-page crop report for instance -- tailor it to their own clientele and whisk it away in the form of electrons to appear on the thousands of ionized screens throughout the United States. There the eyes of editors, farmers, buyers, sellers and others scrutinize it and make it available to their own readers or their own needs.

A couple of points that came out of the meeting, according to Office of Information's Russell Forte, who chaired it, are perhaps a portent part of things to come in the electronic world. For purposes of electronic dissemination of information, we may all have to stop thinking of reports in terms of "documents," he said, with the inherent blank lines between blocks of copy. Blank lines are expensive to send and expensive to receive. It's also time to start thinking in terms of standards for equipment, so equipment "interfaces" with less hassle.

Agencies taking part in EDI thus far and their data administrators are Bill Crock, AMS; Tom Davis, EMS; Charlotte Travieso, ES; Carolyn Moore, FAS; Holly Majkowski, NAL; Roxanne Williams, OIRM and head of the project; Forte, OI, Special Programs Division; Glen Smith, SRS; and Roger Smith, WA0B.

ELECTRONIC TECHNOLOGY TASK FORCE

One of the recommendations from the Electronic Technology Task Force's July report, "that Extension Service/Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ES/ECOP) should establish a continuing task force for support of Extension program delivery using electronic technologies" was approved by ECOP.

The new task force, to operate from July 1985 to November 1988, is chaired by Eldon E. Fredericks, Head, Agricultural Communication Service, Purdue Univ.; and includes Karen Berke, Asst. to Director, Communications, Univ. of Calif.; Art Hussey, Director, Northeast Computer Institute, Pennsylvania State Univ.; Dalton McAfee, Asst. Administrator, Agricultural Extension Programs, North Carolina A&T State Univ.; James McGrann, Department of Agricultural Economics, Texas A&M Univ.; Charlotte Travieso, Staff Leader/Management Systems, Extension Service, USDA; Roy Rauschkolb, ECOP Advisor; and David Dik, IPA, Information Technology, Cornell Univ. For more information, contact: Charlotte Travieso at (202) 447-8155 or Dialcom AGS019, or Fredericks, (317) 494-8396 or Dialcom AGS802.

EXTENSION VIDEOTAPES COMPLETED

Two videotape projects were recently completed for USDA's Extension Service. "Extension in the Year 2000," was shown to all national Extension staff in USDA's Jefferson Auditorium on Monday, Sept. 9.

The second, "Strategic Planning Process and How It Can Be Used In Personal and Professional Lives," was prepared by Extension family life specialists for staff use. Contact: Ovid Bay, Extension Service information director, at (202) 447-3007 or Dialcom AGS094.

POTATO VIDEOTAPE PRODUCED IN IDAHO

The Cooperative Extension Service at the University of Idaho recently completed a videotape production called "Potato Bruise Prevention: The Harvester." The program premiered in late July at the 69th annual meeting of the Potato Association of America in Boise, Idaho.

Anyone interested in finding out more about the videotape can get a descriptive brochure by contacting Scott V. Fedale at the Univ. of Idaho, Agricultural Communication Center, Moscow, ID 83843, or call (208) 885-6436.

ANNUAL GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING SEMINAR

A two-day intensive training seminar, sponsored by Government Publisher magazine and the Corporate Publishing Society will be held Oct. 17-18 at the Washington, DC Convention Center. If you are involved in publishing, this seminar will bring you up-to-date in document and publication technology and applications. First person registration fee is \$295, and \$245 for additional persons from same office. Contact: Typeworld Exhibits, 15 Oakridge Circle, Wilmington, MA 01887. Telephone (617) 658-6876.

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATORS CONFERENCE

The 1985 National Conference of the National Association of Government Communicators is scheduled for Nov. 4-6, at Loew's L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington, DC. The theme is: "Communicating the Right Message."

Topics include communicating the right message in speeches, press releases, radio announcements and video presentations, and in-house communiques.

For information and registration, contact: NAGC, 80 S. Early Street, Alexandria, VA 22304. Telephone (703) 823-4821.

INSIDE INFORMATION is published for distribution to public affairs and information staff members of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, its agencies, state departments of agriculture and land grant universities. Any items, comments or inquiries should be addressed to either Denver Browning or Nancy Bevis, Office of Information, Room 536-A, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250 or to AGR009 mailbox on the Dialcom system, or call (202) 447-7454.

